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Central Intelligence Agency

Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

5 January 1984

NICARAGUA-EL SALVADOR: SANDINISTA AND SALVADORAN GUERRILLA PROPAGANDA NETWORKS

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Summary

Since seizing power in 1979, the Sandinistas have vigorously pursued a policy of controlling information at home while developing a sophisticated apparatus for disseminating propaganda abroad. We judge that Sandinista propaganda efforts--including media control, establishment of solidarity organizations, and extensive travel by government leaders--have been instrumental in eliciting international sympathy for Nicaragua. We believe that the regime, now facing mounting criticism of the Nicaraguan revolution and concerned over US initiatives in Central America, increasingly will rely on propaganda both to counter its critics and to generate pressure on Washington.

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Information regarding the propaganda network of the Salvadoran guerrillas is sparse and reflects their extra-legal status. Nevertheless, available reporting and public information suggests that they view their propaganda effort as a major element in maintaining international political and material support. As

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This memorandum was requested by the Director of Central Intelligence. It was prepared by [redacted] *the Central America Branch, ALA. It was coordinated by the Directorate of Operations and contains information available as of 5 January 1984. Questions and comments are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, Middle America/Caribbean Division, OALA* [redacted]

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in Nicaragua, we believe the Salvadoran guerrillas will soon intensify their propaganda efforts, particularly as they move to discredit the election set for late March and attempt to intensify opposition against US support for the government.

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THE SANDINISTA PROPAGANDA APPARATUS

Propaganda plays a central role in Nicaraguan domestic and foreign policy. The Sandinistas have established a propaganda and media network whose purpose is to mold domestic opinion and present a favorable image of the Nicaraguan revolution abroad. In addition, much of Sandinista propaganda efforts have been devoted to mobilizing international pressure against alleged US destabilization efforts. Nicaraguan propaganda structures play a critical role in recent Sandinista efforts to convey the image of flexibility in domestic and foreign policy.

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Structurally and substantively, the Sandinista propaganda apparatus imitates those in Cuba and the Soviet bloc. Both the Cuban and Soviet press have picked up Sandinista statements and themes, thus extending Nicaragua's propaganda reach.

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Media Management

Since 1979, the Sandinistas increasingly have extended their direct control over the Nicaraguan media. Dominance of the media assists the regime in fostering new revolutionary values at home and obscuring internal dissent from outside view. While media policies have encouraged uniformity, responsibility is shared by several government and party organs.

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One of the first acts of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) after assuming power in 1979 was to organize a Department of Propaganda and Political Education (DEPEP), responsible for overall information and propaganda strategy. It coordinates major propaganda events, such as the annual anniversary celebration and mass demonstrations. Since 1980, FSLN National Directorate member Carlos Nunez has assumed general responsibility for direction and control of media and propaganda activities.

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The Sandinista press includes two of the country's three newspapers, both television stations, two powerful radio

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stations, and a network of smaller ones. Since the regime declared a state of emergency in March 1982, the opposition newspaper and a dwindling number of independent radio stations have had to submit to prior censorship. In 1983, the Sandinistas prohibited live broadcasts of Archbishop Obando y Bravo's weekly television Mass, an unprecedented action in Nicaragua.

The Minister of Interior, Tomas Borge, controls censorship through his Office of Communications Media. The Ministry of Culture provides auxiliary aid in promoting knowledge of and support for the government. Its chief, revolutionary priest Ernesto Cardenal, has been dispatched on numerous propaganda trips abroad. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs disseminates propaganda information to diplomatic missions, and in late 1982 organized a press center in Managua to aid foreign journalists. Both the Ministry and the FSLN's Department of International Relations have offices dedicated to promoting solidarity activities in foreign countries.

Sandinista leaders have repeatedly stressed the need for "revolutionary journalism" to reflect Nicaragua's continuing revolution. The pro-Sandinista Nicaraguan Journalists Union (UPN) was formed in 1979, and it has associated itself with leftist Latin American and Soviet journalists' associations. The UPN has also developed ties with East European countries and signed a cooperation accord with Czechoslovakia in June 1982.

Dissemination of News Abroad

The Sandinistas have gradually expanded the structures for dissemination of information abroad.

The New Nicaraguan News Agency (ANN) was created in September 1979 to provide copy favorable to the Sandinistas that would compete with international news agencies. Its director has publicly acknowledged that ANN is an instrument in support of the government's foreign policy and an organ of ideological struggle. ANN had opened 5 offices by mid-1982, with plans to expand its services by 1984. Technical accords were concluded with East European countries and Havana in 1980, and ANN expanded its news reach by joining the pool of non-aligned agencies.

The official Sandinista newspaper, Barricada, began publication of monthly international editions in Spanish and English in 1982. A Managua-based organization publishes a

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bilingual monthly magazine Soberania, which is devoted to sensationalist stories, rabid anti-Americanism, and personal attacks on US officials. Philip Agee is listed as a member of the editorial board, and in the past the magazine has published lists of alleged CIA agents.

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Nicaragua's neighbors--particularly Costa Rica--have expressed concerns because Sandinista radio and television are received in some areas of their territory. On occasion, there have been complaints of Nicaraguan interference with their domestic broadcasts.

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The government's principal radio station, Voz de Nicaragua, reportedly plans to increase its power significantly in the next six months in order to broadcast as far away as Europe.

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On a regular basis, the Sandinista press has originated or repeated disinformation about US policies and activities. In December 1983, for example, the Sandinista press reprinted a story alleging US use of chemical weapons in Grenada. The regime also circulated a report that an American bishop had been kidnapped and killed by Indian insurgents. The Sandinistas may have calculated that news of Bishop Schlaefer's death would have an unsettling effect in the US, even if the story eventually proved untrue.

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International Solidarity

The FSLN has constructed a number of national pro-Sandinista propaganda organizations with the dual purpose of socializing its own population and maintaining ties with external revolutionary and solidarity organizations. These Nicaraguan organizations reflect the Sandinistas' commitment to the struggle against "imperialism" and their need for foreign support

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The Nicaraguan People's Solidarity Committee (CNSP) was formed in October 1979, and has primary responsibility for promotion of internationalism and forging overt ties with national liberation groups. It coordinates activities of pro-Sandinista foreign residents in Nicaragua, and internationalists who have formed voluntary work brigades. The CNSP made preparations in 1982 for meetings in Managua of the World Front for Solidarity with the Salvadoran People--an

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organization headed by a US citizen claiming representatives from 27 countries.

The Nicaraguan Association for Friendship with Socialist Countries (ANAPS) was founded in June 1981, closely patterned on a similar Cuban organizaiton. It has promoted political and cultural events, including friendship agreements with the Soviet Union, East Germany, and Cuba, and coordination of programs for Communist visitors.

The Nicaraguan Peace Committee (CONIPAZ) was established in April 1981, and quickly affiliated with the Moscow-led World Peace Council (WPC). CONIPAZ President Olga Aviles serves as WPC Executive Vice President. In April 1983, the organization convoked a peace conference in Managua attended by 100 delegations from over 20 countries which condemned alleged US aggression.

The Anti-Imperialist Tribunal of Our Americas (TANA) is a Managua-based international organization formed in September 1981. The members of the Tribunal are avowed anti-US journalists, intellectuals, and politicians, and the organization is headed by former Guatemalan Foreign Minister Guillermo Toriello. TANA claims that 21 chapters have been established throughout Latin America. At an October 1983 conference in Managua, the organization called for formation of an international brigade to fight in Nicaragua. TANA publishes the magazine Soberania whose articles frequently are the subject of news stories by international wire services.

Following the Cuban example, the Sandinistas have also used cultural organizations to promote ties with leftist intellectuals in other countries and to capitalize on the prestige of well known writers and artists. In July 1983, for example, the Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers (ASTC) organized a conference on Central America attended by 200 intellectuals, including 100 from the US.

The Sandinistas place particular emphasis on promoting solidarity committees in foreign countries in order to spread favorable information about Nicaragua, develop political and financial support, and mobilize pressure on their governments to

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criticize US policies. Solidarity committees have mounted vigils and demonstrations, organized letter writing campaigns, collected clothing and money for Nicaragua, placed newspaper advertisements, and mobilized contingents of international volunteers to come to Nicaragua to aid the revolution. Last July, Managua hosted the Second International Meeting for Solidarity with Nicaragua, attended by committees from 22 countries.

Diplomacy and Propaganda

The Sandinistas also frequently dispatch high level delegations abroad to defend Sandinista policies. Foreign Minister D'Escoto probably spent as much time on the road as he did at home last year, and Culture Minister Cardenal was another frequent traveler. Interior Minister Borge visited 7 countries in Western Europe as a one-man truth squad last fall. The Sandinistas probably aided their peace offensive in late 1983 through frequent consultations with the Contadora countries. Junta Coordinator Daniel Ortega's three day tour of Contadora capitals in October helped to dramatize Nicaraguan claims that the US was preparing an invasion.

Nicaragua has scored some propaganda successes through its active diplomacy in international organizations. The Sandinistas have brought their complaints about the US to the UN Security Council on several occasions in order to attract world attention and support, and they mounted a similar effort in the General Assembly last fall. Nicaragua scored a major diplomatic victory when it was elected to the UN Security Council for the 1983-1984 term. A few weeks later, it hosted a massive meeting of the Nonaligned Movement which gave the Sandinistas firm backing.

The Sandinistas' attention to the possibilities for propaganda opportunities frequently gives them the edge in comparison with their Central American neighbors. The

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Nicaraguans lodge frequent diplomatic protests with their neighbors over border incidents, and as a result the Sandinista version usually receives international press attention. Similarly, the Sandinistas often circulate protests and information bulletins at the United Nations, while their neighbors remain silent.

Sandinista Propaganda and the US

We judge that the Sandinistas consider the US as the most important market for their propaganda. While they are apparently convinced of Washington's hostility, they probably believe that they can have some effect on its policies by influencing US public opinion. Although the Sandinista propaganda line is unremittingly hostile to the US and pro-Soviet, the regime is receptive to US journalists and Congressional visitors. Moreover, Sandinista openness becomes a propaganda theme in itself, and it is contrasted with recent US denials of visas to Interior Minister Borge and Council of State President Nunez.

Solidarity efforts by American citizens undoubtedly have special significance for the Sandinistas. They recently publicized representations by US citizens living and working in Nicaragua that they felt safe and did not wish to be used as a pretext for US intervention. Similarly, the Sandinistas probably welcome the now weekly demonstrations outside the US Embassy by American activists and press reports of their plans to mount peace vigils in areas where anti-Sandinista insurgents have been active. More importantly, the Sandinistas have strongly supported the so-called "popular church" in Nicaragua, and through it they have received sympathetic treatment from Church sources in the United States.

The Sandinistas repeatedly raise the spectre of Vietnam in their propaganda, and they probably regard that theme as the most effective in influencing the American public. Nevertheless, the Sandinistas must spend a considerable amount of their propaganda resources to defend themselves against charges of repression. Recurrent excesses--such as the mistreatment of the Pope during his March 1983 visit--waste propaganda capital and offset the potential value to the regime of its propaganda apparatus.

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SALVADORAN GUERRILLA PROPAGANDA

The insurgents' propaganda apparatus appears sophisticated and extensive. Calculated largely to maintain political and material support from non-Communist nations and organizations, it involves use of clandestine radio and press services, as well as diplomatic contacts, information offices, and "solidarity" committees in Latin America, Western Europe, and the US. 25X1

The breadth and relative success of the guerrilla propaganda apparatus in part reflect the close cooperation provided by Cuba and Nicaragua. It also stems from the eclectic membership of the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR), the political wing of the insurgency. Institutionalized by the Marxist guerrillas in 1980 to broaden their political base, most FDR spokesmen are social democrats, Christian Democrats, or independent leftist professionals. 25X1

The guerrillas also founded a political-diplomatic commission designed to present the insurgent program internationally and imply an evolving government in exile. The FDR has since used its "progressive" credentials--including its membership in the Socialist International--to maintain support by claiming a democratic orientation and playing down the extent of Marxist-Leninist influence within the guerrilla coalition. 25X1
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The insurgents' use of the FDR as a moderate political voice probably has helped the organization to establish its many offices and support groups throughout the region, and also has facilitated the finance and weapons-seeking efforts of guerrilla representatives abroad. By 1981 25X1
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there were as many as 60 such representatives worldwide. We believe that number has grown significantly in the past three years. 25X1

Use of the Media

The insurgents have operated as many as five clandestine radio stations--one for each faction--including the widely monitored Radio Venceremos, which has operated with little interruption since January 1981. These commercial band networks report guerrilla military successes against government forces and other information, which is frequently picked up by international wire services and broadcast media. The insurgents also

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occasionally use these stations, which reportedly transmit from varied locations in El Salvador, in efforts to recruit local peasants and to urge government troops to defect. 25X1

As part of its propaganda support for the insurgents, Havana regularly provides a forum for the radio stations by replaying their political commentaries, military communiques, and news bulletins. Monitoring in early 1983 indicated that these stations broadcast in excess of 40 hours per week, with the lion's share coming from Venceremos. 25X1

Cuba also has placed high priority on promoting Salpress, the news agency of the Salvadoran insurgents. According to Havana Radio, Salpress was formed in Mexico city in December 1980, just before the start of the January 1981 insurgent "final offensive." It now has branch offices in six other countries, correspondents serving with guerrilla groups in El Salvador, and membership in the Nonaligned Movement's news agency organization. Salpress presumably has received considerable Cuban assistance and guidance. 25X1

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Human Rights Tactics

The credibility of guerrilla propaganda both within and outside the region has, in our judgment, been assisted by their effective attacks on the human rights situation in El Salvador. As outlined in captured documents dating from 1980, they have focused much of this effort on churchmen, academics, and other professionals sympathetic to change in Central America. 25X1

The left's penetration of, or affiliation with most of the human rights organizations in El Salvador apparently has been instrumental in their success. As of mid-1982, monthly political violence statistics reported by four of these organizations were running approximately 50 to 100 percent higher than local press

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reports which form the basis for US Embassy statistics. Moreover, these groups consistently charge that the government is responsible for virtually all violent deaths in the country over the past four years.

For example, as early as 1979 Socorro Juridico (Legal Aid Society) was composed largely of volunteer members and sympathizers of groups which had joined the guerrilla coalition.

Monthly figures disseminated by UCA (the University of Central America) are equally suspect. Often referred to as the Catholic University, the school has been a key political base of the militant left for nearly a decade.

Hemispheric Links

Since its inception, the FDR has sent representatives throughout the region to attract support for the insurgency. Their activities have included the establishment of interest sections and information offices in a variety of Latin American countries, as well as the US and Canada. Partly as a result, the insurgency apparently has received a relatively steady stream of financial and logistical support from local groups, in addition to cooperation from some governments.

Mexico has been of particular importance to the insurgents.

Mexico joined with France in publicly recognizing the insurgent alliance as "a legitimate political force" and advocated negotiations with the Salvadoran junta. The close relationship between the guerrillas and Mexico City appears to continue

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Elsewhere in the region 25X1
the insurgents were using their ties 25X1
to a teachers union in Honduras to carry out unspecified propaganda activities in that country. In April 1983 25X1
the FDR was planning to 25X1
step up propaganda in the Caribbean including more frequent trips by political representatives as well as the distribution of literature to journalists, church leaders, trade unionists, and government officials. 25X1

More recently, 25X1
Colombian President Betancur had requested a 25X1
permanent insurgent representative to be sent to his country. In our judgment, it is likely that Betancur and/or the Salvadoran left has felt the need for an intermediary in Colombia. We do not believe that Colombia would publicly acknowledge the representatives, however, given its involvement in the Contadora process and the negative reaction this would generate among conservative Colombians--especially in the military--with respect to the guerrilla situation there. 25X1

European and Other Ties

The breadth and effectiveness of the guerrilla propaganda network outside of the hemisphere have been apparent 25X1
over the last few years. 25X1
, that the FDR's European 25X1
operations were directed by a representative in Paris. 25X1
various European labor and religious 25X1
groups were major financial contributors. Swedish organizations alone were said to a have contributed more than $300,000 to the FDR during the first 10 months of 1981. 25X1

The apparent financial and logistical resources of the insurgency were also underscored by US Embassy reporting indicating that an FDR delegation's itinerary included West Germany, Sweden, Algeria, and New Delhi during one period in 1981. The relative success of such globetrotting was highlighted at roughly the same time by the willingness of West European socialists to sponsor solidarity rallies for the insurgents in Paris, Bern, Frankfurt, and Rome. 25X1

Other propaganda objectives seem to focus as much on marshalling international opinion against Washington as they do on supporting the insurgency. In early 1981, for instance, two of Ungo's colleagues met with Canadian officials in an effort to 25X1

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garner diplomatic backing. Although the attempt was unsuccessful, Canadian officials intimated that the propaganda moves were generating increasing public pressure on Ottawa to oppose US military assistance to San Salvador. 25X1

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the external propaganda organization is becoming 25X1
increasingly compartmented and may be expanding. 25X1
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a new International Relations Committee will coordinate insurgent public relations activities abroad. The Committee, which includes personnel from Marxist front organizations, has appointed two representatives to direct propaganda activities in Europe, and one in each of the following areas: Africa, Central America, the Caribbean, and Mexico; South America; the Socialist Bloc, Canada and the United States. 25X1
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insurgent political spokesmen were present in the US, Austria, Denmark, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Spain, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Algeria, Libya, Ecuador, Brazil, and Peru. In our judgment, this list is particularly striking insofar as it is dominated by non-leftist governments. Nevertheless, public opinion in these countries has been led to believe--incorrectly--that the Salvadoran insurgency is a popular uprising, a fact that attests to the power of guerrilla propaganda. 25X1

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